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Richard Strauss's 'Feuersnot' in Berlin
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for solo voices with tablature for the lute appeared; Robert Jones published his 'First Book' in 1600, a second in 1601, and a third in 1608 (not 1605, as stated on p. 193). Books of Consort Lessons, Fancies or Fantasias written for groups of instruments of various kinds, and especially the characteristic English masque, gave scope to the talent of such men as Morley, Gibbons, Campion, Lock, and others. When church music again came to the front at the time of the Restoration the result was shown in greater richness of harmonisation, a keener sense of rhythm, and in the definite adoption of declamatory solo music.

Pelham Humfrey, John Blow, Benjamin Rogers, and others helped to lay the foundation of the new kind of church music, but they all were overshadowed by the extraordinary genius of Henry Purcell. His anthems reach the highest point of that time. They differ largely from the old church music in the solo and ensemble pieces that they contain instead of the old massive chorus, also in the amount of instrumental scoring, for they are often preceded by symphonies written in two movements at least, which are almost equivalent to overtures. Purcell showed his variety of resource in choral work in his music for plays and operas, and especially in the numerous odes, secular and sacred, which were the forerunners of the cantatas and oratorios of a later date. The intention of making the music as apt as possible to the spirit of the words is evident both in the choral and solo writing, expressive harmonies being employed to bring out particular passages with intense vividness, while as for tunefulness—

> Probably no composer except Schubert has ever had a readier fund of melody; and it always rings true and characteristic of the country to which he belonged.

Here we must pause, for in the space at our disposal it is only possible to touch on some of the results of seventeenth-century artistic activity. Sir Hubert Parry does not allow us to depend altogether on his graphic verbal descriptions, but prints a large number of musical passages to illustrate various points. It is unfortunate that in these examples so many errors have escaped detection in the proof-reading—accidentals are omitted or wrongly placed (exs. 159, 167, 179, 217, 224, 242) and wrong notes occur (exs. 140, 171b, 216, 290a, &c.)—one looks for greater accuracy in a work of this high standard. Sir Hubert Parry has obviously ransacked foreign and home libraries for manuscripts and seventeenth century publications, but he has wisely avoided any attempt to give an exhaustive list of compositions or composers, which would have unnecessarily overweighted the book, and delayed the successful completion of a great and arduous piece of work.

CECIE STAINER.

RICHARD STRAUSS'S 'FEUERSNOT' IN BERLIN.

The latest work of Richard Strauss—the one-act opera 'Feuersnot'—has had a career of rapid success in its own country. It will probably be successful in other countries too in time; but it is in many respects so very Teutonic, that it would be rash to predict its quick dissemination elsewhere. An important stage in its progress was its first production in Berlin on October 28, before an audience musically very representative, but socially not so brilliant as it would have been had the Court not chosen that evening for a visit to Madame Sarah Bernhardt. The production was a triumph. Those who know the ways of the Berlin public assert that it is a long time since the composer of a new opera has been honoured by ten recalls, and that Herr Strauss's personal popularity in Berlin—where he is one of the conductors of the Opera—had little influence on the verdict of the public.

It is in many ways a work to which it is difficult to apply the ordinary canons of criticism, for it has moments of everything from opera bouffe to grand opera; and yet it leaves the hearer with a remarkable impression of homogeneity. The orchestra is treated with unparalleled freedom, and the main interest of the work centres in it; but it is hardly just to say that it is too symphonic, for Herr Strauss never allows considerations of purely musical development to hamper him in the attainment of dramatic effect. Those who know his orchestral works only will be surprised and delighted at his extraordinary mastery over choral effects; and it is hardly an exaggeration to say that some of the most important choruses come very near to the invention of a new art-form. He can create atmosphere by means of a chorus almost as deftly as by means of instruments. And as regards beauty of orchestral colour and ingenuity of scoring, 'Feuersnot' is equal to his greatest symphonic works; while in directness of utterance and beauty of melody it surpasses them. True he draws somewhat on folk-song, but to such melodies as that of the opening of *Kunrad's* address from the balcony—and to one of *Kunrad's* chief *leitmotives*—the epithet 'beautiful' cannot justly be denied, and moreover they are unmistakably Straussian.

The plot of Herr Ernst von Wolzogen's 'Singgedicht' is derived from an old Dutch legend, and he brings it into connection with the celebrations of Midsummer Eve and the lighting of the Johannisfeuer—the symbolical significance of which, as a glorification of the senses, is familiar in German literature. The scene is laid in Munich in the 'fabelhafte Unzeit' (the fabulous No-time—or Bad Time), and on Midsummer Eve *Kunrad der Ebner* is roused from his abstraction by the children asking for fuel for the bonfire. He suddenly realises how foolish he has been to neglect life and love for the sake of his old moth-eaten books, and bids the boys put them all into the fire. And then his eyes fall on *Diemut* the Burgomaster's daughter, and he promptly woos her and kisses her. She is enraged and plans revenge. She simulates affection for him, and promises him a midnight meeting if he will ascend to her room in a basket which she promises to draw up. But she leaves him dangling in mid-air and calls the people to scoff at him. He summons his magic power to his aid and causes all the flames to be extinguished, and tells the people that they cannot burn again till the maiden consents to be his. She quickly appears at the window and takes him in. Then all the people turn to her and urge her to yield. The two choruses—that which is sung when darkness comes, which ends in an outburst of rage against *Kunrad;* and that in which the anger of the people is turned against the too coy *Diemut*—are the two most striking moments of the opera. After the people have left the stage we come to the extremely beautiful and dramatic excerpt which was heard recently at a Queen's Hall Concert. Then, gradually, a light is seen in *Diemut's* room, and suddenly all the flames burst out, and the opera ends in a pæan of love.

So much has been said in the German criticisms of 'Feuersnot' about the topical allusions made in the speech addressed to the crowd from the balcony of *Diemut's* chamber by *Kunrad*, that it may be worth while to see what they are. *Kunrad* may be taken as typical of the new spirit as represented by the

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author and composer. He tells the people—who have been speculating as to his parentage and country—that the house in which he has been living was that of Master Reichardt, 'the ruler of spirits'—that is Wagner. Now Wagner means in German 'the daring man.' *Kunrad* continues: 'though Reichardt did much for you and your city you cast out "the daring man"—*den Wagner*. But you did not drive out the restless new spirit which is always spoiling for a fight (*stellt sich zum Strauss*). Still many another good man and true came (*Wohl zogen will' wackere Leut'*) to you, but all in vain. You remain in loveless outer darkness, and only from a maiden's love can light come again.' The whole is so ingeniously done that it seems quite natural, and would be passed over by anyone not on the watch. Herr Strauss's way of accompanying this harangue deserves attention, and contains much instruction as to the ethics and uses of musical quotation. When *Kunrad* talks of Wagner as 'the noble ruler of spirits' the Walhall motive in all its serene dignity is heard from the brass—a noble tribute to his power. The words referring to his banishment are sung by *Kunrad* to the 'Flying Dutchman' theme—which adds point to the bitter satire, for the 'Dutchman' was the least daring of Wagner's works. The allusion to Strauss is accompanied by a motif from his own opera 'Guntram.' But then does not *Hans Sachs* quote 'Tristan' musically, and does not *Leporello* quote 'Figaro'?

One instance may be given of Strauss's ingenuity in the metamorphosing of themes. The subject which accompanies *Kunrad's* first wooing of *Diemut* is, in its first form, powerfully expressive of her indignation. By a change of rhythm and harmony it becomes a deliciously piquant illustration of her mockery. In augmentation a part of it represents 'Feuersnot' (Fire-famine), which is due to her rejection of him; and finally it appears in yet another rhythmic and harmonic guise, as the hymn of triumphant love. The performance at Berlin under the composer's direction was admirable, the orchestra being specially praiseworthy, as its task was probably the severest ever set to an operatic orchestra. The chorus, too, did wonders, and Fräulein Destinn as *Diemut* and Herr Berger as *Kunrad* were excellent musically and dramatically. All the scenes of popular gaiety and indignation went with irresistible swing. Those who read the libretto can have little idea of its excellence for stage purposes, for it hangs together remarkably, and moves swiftly to a climax and is full of human interest. And it is the human interest of the music which is its chief virtue, for Strauss can write a popular dance which will set the heads wagging, though it is made up of three themes moving at once, and can catch the atmosphere of merry-making as truthfully as that of metaphysical romance.

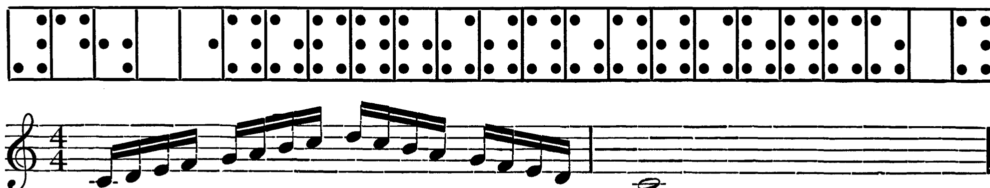
A. K.

Reviews.

Braille Music Notation for the Blind. By Edward Watson. [Novello and Company, Limited.]

This volume, the latest addition to Messrs. Novello's Primer series, comes forth bearing this hall-mark: 'The official text-book of the British and Foreign Association for the promotion of the education and employment of the blind.' In the year 1829, Louis Braille, a sightless Frenchman, invented a system of expressing the sounds both of music and of speech (and also numerals) by means of raised dots, embossed into thick paper, to be deciphered by the touch of the finger. Five years later he improved his method, and in 1888 an International Congress, held at Cologne, decided upon the use of the Braille system (for music) in France, England, Germany, and Denmark. The mysteries—for mysteries they certainly are to those who are blessed with the precious sense of vision—of this invaluable Braille aid to those who are deprived of sight, Mr. Watson's treatise seeks to unfold. As the book is intended for sighted people—teachers of the blind and the much larger number of musicians who must feel a sympathetic interest in their sightless brethren—the Braille notation is given in a *printed* form as an equivalent to the usual raised dots. It would not be possible within the limits of our space to give any idea of the scope of Mr. Watson's pages. The book should be studied for its own sake and for the sake of those for whom it has been so industriously prepared.

In order however to excite curiosity, and as furnishing a specimen of the notation, we give, from Mr. Watson's Primer, the following example, first in Braille, and secondly in ordinary notation. How simple it seems in comparison!



Coronation March. By Frederic H. Cowen.
God save the King. Arranged by Edward Elgar.
Te Deum laudamus in B flat. By C. Villiers Stanford.
Te Deum laudamus (Thanksgiving for Victory). By Arthur Sullivan. [Novello and Company, Limited.]

The primary object of a full score is for conducting purposes, but the secondary use to which it can be put is of hardly less importance, perhaps even greater than the first. In stating this we have in mind the student of instrumentation, to whom the advantage of having the material for analysing full scores is an invaluable aid to his artistic equipment. Example is better than precept, and however well a book on orchestration may be written, even by an expert, the secrets of the art can best be learned by observation—first, the hearing ear, and then the analytical eye.

The foregoing remarks may serve as a preliminary to calling attention to four works enumerated above, which are all by modern English composers. Dr. Cowen's brilliantly-scored March was written to commemorate the recent Coronation, and for half-a-crown one can see what Dr. Elgar is capable of doing for 'God save the King' when he 'turns it on,' orchestrally speaking. That important part of an orchestratist's equipment—the proper and restrained use of instruments when accompanying voices—is admirably demonstrated by Sir Charles Stanford in the score of his popular Te Deum in B flat; and an outstanding feature of Sullivan's posthumous Te Deum is the orchestration for strings, brass instruments, and organ. No apology need be made for calling attention to the beautiful and artistic manner in which these scores have been engraved.

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